

Editorial: Remembering a Friend, Following the Master

By S.T. Antonio

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“Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey.” – Zechariah 9:9

Frontier church planters live at the crux of contradicting forces. A creative—and at times heart-wrenching—tension exists between the “pull” of Christ’s love and calling on our lives, and the “push” of resistance we encounter in least-reached communities. While many of us get our foot “in the door,” it is often challenging to earn a seat “at the table” where long-term presence, relational trust, and lasting kingdom impact can flower and flourish.

Our Savior is no stranger to the challenge of navigating the call of his Father amidst hostile barriers. As the embodiment of Truth (John 14:6), Jesus boldly confessed his identity and calling when his hour came (Luke 22:67-70; John 10:17-18). Throughout his ministry, however, he was intentional and circumspect about how, when, and to whom he disclosed himself (Matt 11:4-6; Mark 8:30; John 2:24-25). In his final “triumphal

entry,” Jesus opted not for an unambiguous, transparent declaration of his Messiahship and mission, a statement ripe for misunderstanding which could have fast-tracked the passion week. He instead embodied a carefully-chosen prophetic sign (Zech 9:9; Matt 21:1-11), one which obliquely but authentically conveyed his person and mission for those with eyes to see.

Following a Creative-Access Messiah

In this issue of *Seedbed*, several frontier church planters from various contexts offer the various ways they have sought to follow the Master amidst the tensions and pressures of identity and access in least-reached communities. As someone who has lived in this tension myself, I learned a great deal from these contributors and am grateful for the opportunity to share their rich insight with our readers.

- A veteran scholar-practitioner shares a key paradigm shift regarding his social identity that emerged from his pilgrimage of serving for several years in—and being expelled from—Central Asia.
- A female worker in East Asia who relocated from a creative-access country to a more “open” country engages a variety of perspectives in the literature and among peers related to truthful communication, fruitful witness, and the “m” word.
- A scholar-practitioner presents two case studies of leaders who responded to severe disruption in their ministry fields by flexibly adapting their roles and identities resulting in fruitful kingdom advance.
- An engineer with decades of service in the Arabian Peninsula shares stories of ways he sought to naturally integrate his work and his witness into his missional call.
- An experienced leader working in community development shares challenges, benefits, and practical tips for those seeking to integrate community development and church planting.

- An educational administrator and missional mentor gives practical tips to leaders on how to coach and support Global Professionals (GPs) through unnecessary guilt and potential burnout from their multiple vocations.

Supplementing these articles, four practitioners offer incisive reflections on an array of books, including Timothy Keller's *Every Good Endeavor* and Craig Ott's *Teaching and Learning Cross-Culturally*. We also include reviews of two non-ministry-related books with surprising relevance for identity and access of frontier workers.

Learning in Diversity, Navigating Global Turmoil

Frontier disciple makers continue to approach identity and access from various perspectives, and this *Seedbed* issue is no exception. Different contexts, callings, and personalities yield different approaches, and rightly so. *Seedbed* is never intended to represent the views of the editors nor of any organization (editors and authors hail from multiple organizations). Our goal is to stimulate fresh thinking and fruitful practice by engaging with new ideas and case studies from diverse corners of the harvest. We firmly believe we learn more and innovate better when we transcend our bubbles and interact honestly and charitably with those different from us, especially on critical issues such as identity and access of frontier workers.

This issue comes at a time of global turmoil and grief amidst wars and rumors of wars with enormous implications for identity and access of workers in the near and distant future. Our hearts and prayers are especially with our collaborators—and the unreached peoples they serve—in communities traumatized by dehumanizing hatred and violence, such as Israel-Palestine, Manipur, Sudan, and Burkina Faso—to name just a few. Disruptive, soul-rending conflicts represent just one manifestation of the urgent challenge of discerning together the Lord's wisdom for how to be his ambassadors in a volatile, complex, and dangerous world.

As we discern the Spirit's leading together, we do so as those whose ultimate identity—whatever other identities and roles we adopt—is wrapped up in our humble King. The Lord of Hosts could have acquired access and entry to his rightful throne through the military supremacy of heaven, but he instead adopted the form of a servant (Phil 2:7), making his final descent to Jerusalem atop a lowly farm animal (Matt 21:5). As we engage the remaining frontiers of the gospel in these evil days—as teachers, professionals, development workers, and clergy—we will be “little Christs” to the extent that we take our cues from the one who claimed his crown through the cross.

In Memoriam: Honoring a Colaborer and Friend of *Seedbed*

Our cruciform faith means that suffering is an unavoidable part of the package of seeking access to least-reached communities (Phil 3:10; 2 Tim 1:8), and a fortunate few will pay the ultimate price (Rev. 6:11). One example is a beloved friend, co-worker, and former *Seedbed* graphic designer, whom I'll call “Brother Bold.”

I first met Brother Bold several years ago while his family was preparing to relocate to an underserved, high-risk area. Well aware of potential danger, he and his family were consumed with an urgent passion and unwavering determination to gain access and serve the community and bear witness to the love and truth of the Savior. They labored tirelessly to serve with integrity and excellence, while also giving their hearts to share Christ's love and mentor local disciples. Along the way, Brother Bold also found time to lend his graphic design skills to enhance our March and October 2022 issues of *Seedbed*.

Last year, to our loss and his gain, Brother Bold entered the joy of his master and the company of the martyrs. In paying the ultimate price, Brother Bold points us to more than just an example of dedication and integrity in creative-access presence among least-reached people. He

points us to the costly love required to search out the Father's lost sheep, as well as to the inestimable worth of the Lamb who deserves the offering of our lives. We honor Brother Bold—along with other unnamed martyrs—whose sacrificial service directs our eyes back to our humble, suffering King.

The editorial team dedicates this issue of *Seedbed* to the loving memory of our friend and collaborator who finished his race having lived and loved boldly for the glory of Christ.

May the Lord lead us all to bold, wise, and humble ways to honorably steward the tension at the heart of being a “sent-one” in resistant environments, that we might discover healthy, viable, and Christ-formed identity and access in the most challenging, broken communities in our Father's world.

Serving with you,

S.T. Antonio, with the *Seedbed* editorial team